

Summary Description

This is the seventh in a series of nine lessons that introduces the student to Native American history.

Learning Objectives

To have the student learn a few key facts about Nez Perce history and culture.

Approximate Time for Lesson

30 minutes

Suggested Maturity Level for Instruction

Student should be able to read simple words and perform simple addition and subtraction. Also, student should be able to sit still and engage in one-on-one conversation.

References:

Native Languages of the Americans, Laura Redish and Orrin Lewis - <http://www.native-languages.org/new.htm>

Materials Needed

1. Internet Access - Pull up the following:
 - a. United States Map of Native American Populations by Geographic Region (go to <http://portfolio.educ.kent.edu/mcclellandr/zackthezipper/nativeamericans.htm>)
 - b. Picture of earthen house (go to <http://www.native-languages.org/houses.htm>)
 - c. Picture of headdress (go to <http://www.juntosociety.com/native/NezPerce.jpg>)

Preparation

Make sure you have materials open, printed, and/or available prior to beginning the lesson.

Script

Introduction (5 minutes)

1. **Teacher:** Last lesson we learned about the Ute. Because the Ute lived in desert conditions similar to the Apache, their lifestyles were similar, although the Apache seemed more warlike (since even their women learned how to ride the horse and shoot bow and arrow). Now, we're going to learn about the Nez Perce Native Americans, who lived in a wetter area of the United States called the Plateau.
2. **Teacher:** Not only are you going to learn about the Nez Perce, but you're also going to learn about what the Plateau area is, since again, where the Native Americans lived said a lot about how they lived.
3. **Teacher:** OK - so are you ready to learn about the Nez Perce? [\[Get Student's positive response and begin lesson\]](#).

Lesson (20 minutes)

1. Teacher: Nez Perce is pronounced “nezz purse” which was a name given by the French, a European people that we will learn about later. Anyway, in French, Nez Perce meant “pierced nose”. Actually, the name Nez Perce might have been a big accident by the French since the Nez Perce Native Americans did not have any pierced noses (a pierced nose means a small hole in your nose so you can hang jewelry on, just like a pierced ear is used to hang earrings), but the Native Americans who lived near the Nez Perce did have pierced noses and that’s why it may be true that the French thought they saw the Nez Perce and named them “Nez Perce” when they really saw the Nez Perce’s neighbors. Can you say, “Nez Perce”? [[Have the Student practice several times](#)].
2. Teacher: Good. Now, the Nez Perce lived in an area of the United States called the Plateau (specifically called the Columbia Plateau), mostly in the States of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington [[point to these States in the map](#)]. The Plateau is a part of our country which is high and flat. In the area that the Nez Perce lived, however, there were also lakes and rivers.
3. Teacher: And because there were rivers and lakes where the Nez Perce lived, they fished for their food and also ate nuts, seeds, and fruits. But when the Europeans brought horses over to the United States, the Nez Perce became nomads and followed the buffalo for food, just like the Cheyenne, Apache, and Ute. And so, even though the Nez Perce started out fishing to get a lot of their food, they ended up becoming hunters of buffalo and not so much fishing people.
4. Teacher: Now, because it’s colder up there in the Plateau area, the Nez Perce made earthen houses to live in. The way you build an earthen house is to first dig a hole in the ground big enough for people to live in. Then, you build a round roof with wood, reeds, and earth. The Nez Perce made both long oval shaped earthen houses big enough for many families and small circle shaped earthen houses big enough for one family. So why do you think the Nez Perce dug a hole in the ground first for the earthen house? [[Engage the Student in conversation but come to the point that the hole helps protect the families against wind and other harsh weather conditions which were prevalent high up in the Plateau](#)].
5. Teacher: So, the holes in the earthen houses were to protect the Nez Perce against the cold and wind of the high plateau area. Here’re some pictures of earthen houses. [[Show Student picture](#)].
6. Teacher: So when horses came to the United States by the Europeans, the Nez Perce actually changed their homes because they became nomads to follow the buffalo for food. Well, earthen houses are hard to build so the Nez Perce stopped making earthen houses and started to build teepees like the Cheyenne.
7. Teacher: As for clothing, the Nez Perce’s clothes were about the same as the Cheyenne (leather shirts and breech clothes for men, dresses made from deer skin for women). But different from the Cheyenne, the Nez Perce’s leaders wore headdresses made of

feathers that were shorter than the Cheyenne. Here's a picture of a short headdress made of feathers that the Nez Perce wore. [\[Show Student picture of headdress\]](#).

8. Teacher: And the weapons of the Nez Perce used were similar to the Cheyenne, bow and arrows and spears, although later they got rifles from the Americans.
9. Teacher: As for the men and women, the men were in charge of hunting, trading and war while the women were in charge of the family and the house.
10. Teacher: Well, like the Cherokee (remember the Trail of Tears?), the Nez Perce were gathered up and sent to reservation while the Americans took over their lands, which were discovered to have gold (in Oregon).
11. Teacher: OK - time for review. Get in front of the class. [\[Have the Student stand in front of you \(consider inviting other members of the family also to set the stage\) and ask her the following:](#)
 - a. What did the Nez Perce do to search for food in the beginning? They fished
 - b. When horses came to the United States and were used by the Nez Perce, how did that change what the Nez Perce did to search for food? They became nomads and followed the buffalo for food.
 - c. What kind of homes did the Nez Perce live in? First they lived in earthen houses. After horses came to the United States, the Nez Perce started to live in teepees.

[Teacher reviews any questions that the Student missed\]](#).

Wrap Up (5 minutes)

Teacher: [\[Clapping\]](#) You did GREAT! Wonderful job! Are there any questions that you have regarding the Nez Perce? [\[Engage in conversation with the Student and resolve further questions by researching the Internet\]](#).